



Refer to the Status Summary from November 1999 for background information.

The issue

The background

What is the Fish and Wildlife Service's biological opinion on the Forest Plan?

What has the Fish and Wildlife Service recommended to the Forest Service in order to avoid take?

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Indiana Bat in Western North Carolina

A Status Summary Update-April 2000

The U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Fish and Wildlife Service) entered into formal consultation on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and its effects on the Indiana bat. Under the Endangered Species Act, all Federal agencies must ensure that their activities do not jeopardize a federally endangered or threatened species and should develop programs to aid in their recovery. The Fish and Wildlife Service

serves as a consultant to other Federal agencies on all issues related to the Endangered Species Act. By law, this consultation process is a cooperative effort among all parties involved, and the Fish and Wildlife Service actively works with the Federal agencies throughout the consultation. The end result is a biological opinion that determines whether an agency's activities, in this case the Forest Service, will jeopardize the species' existence and provides recommendations to minimize negative effects.

Upon evaluating their activities on the Nantahala and the Pisgah National Forests, the Forest Service determined that their activities may affect the Indiana bat. The Forest Service then began formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service. During the formal consultation process, the Forest Service provided a biological assessment to the Fish and Wildlife Service containing detailed information about their activities. The Fish and Wildlife Service reviewed this information and provided a biological opinion that outlined the effects of the Forest Service's activities on the Indiana bat and included reasonable measures to minimize negative impacts to the species.

After reviewing all the Forest Service's activities, including their management actions to protect, manage, and recover the Indiana bat, the Fish and Wildlife Service determined that implementation of the Forest Plan will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service did find that the Forest Service's activities may result in the incidental take of an Indiana bat in its potential summer range in Graham, Cherokee, Swain, and Macon Counties in western North Carolina. Take, as defined by the Endangered Species Act, includes activities that harass, harm, or kill listed species or degrade their habitat. In the case of the Forest Plan, the potential take the Fish and Wildlife Service identified is incidental to the activities included in the Forest Plan. The Endangered Species Act contains provisions for dealing with incidental take. In this case, the Fish and Wildlife Service provided recommendations to the Forest Service to limit the incidental take as much as possible.

The Fish and Wildlife Service outlined three reasonable and prudent measures to significantly reduce the probability that take (including degradation of habitat) will occur in the four-county area of the Nantahala National Forest. Some specific recommendations are to leave all snags and live trees that could potentially support roosting Indiana bats and ensure that there is adequate foraging and roosting habitat available after any proposed projects are completed. For specific details, the Fish and Wildlife Service's biological opinion is on the Forest Service's web site at <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>.



Martin D. Tuttle, Bat Conservation International ©

Indiana bat colony

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Why did the Fish and Wildlife Service only recommend implementing the terms and conditions in the four-county area on the Nantahala National Forest?

Since the discovery of the Indiana bat maternity colony in Graham County, North Carolina, the Fish and Wildlife Service has considered the summer range of the Indiana bat to include Graham County and the adjacent counties of Cherokee, Macon, and Swain because of the similar habitats and their proximity to Graham County. It is the Fish and Wildlife Service's opinion that extending the range beyond the four-county area is not a reasonable approach to estimating the species' summer range without evidence of Indiana bats outside Graham County, especially since this small maternity colony occurs on the edge of the species' summer range.

Why has the Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the Indiana bat can coexist with forest management activities?

Based on the most current research, Indiana bats rely on a variety of habitat types for roosting and foraging. Riparian areas and flood plains are important roosting and foraging habitats, but the bats also use upland forests for roosting and upland forests, old fields, and pastures with scattered trees for foraging. Indiana bat researchers have determined that this species roosts in dead trees with sloughing bark and live trees that have loose, shaggy bark. Researchers have found that primary roosts are generally in openings or at the edge of forest stands, while alternate roosts can be either in the open or in the interior of the forest stands. The Forest Plan provides the quantity and quality of habitat required by the Indiana bat. Based on this information, the Fish and Wildlife Service believes that forest management activities and the Indiana bat can coexist as long as the recommendations to minimize take of the species are followed.

What if more Indiana bats are found?

The Forest Service is responsible for monitoring the Indiana bat population on the national forests. If more Indiana bats are found outside Graham County, the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service will again enter into consultation and revisit the existing recommendations.

For more information please contact

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